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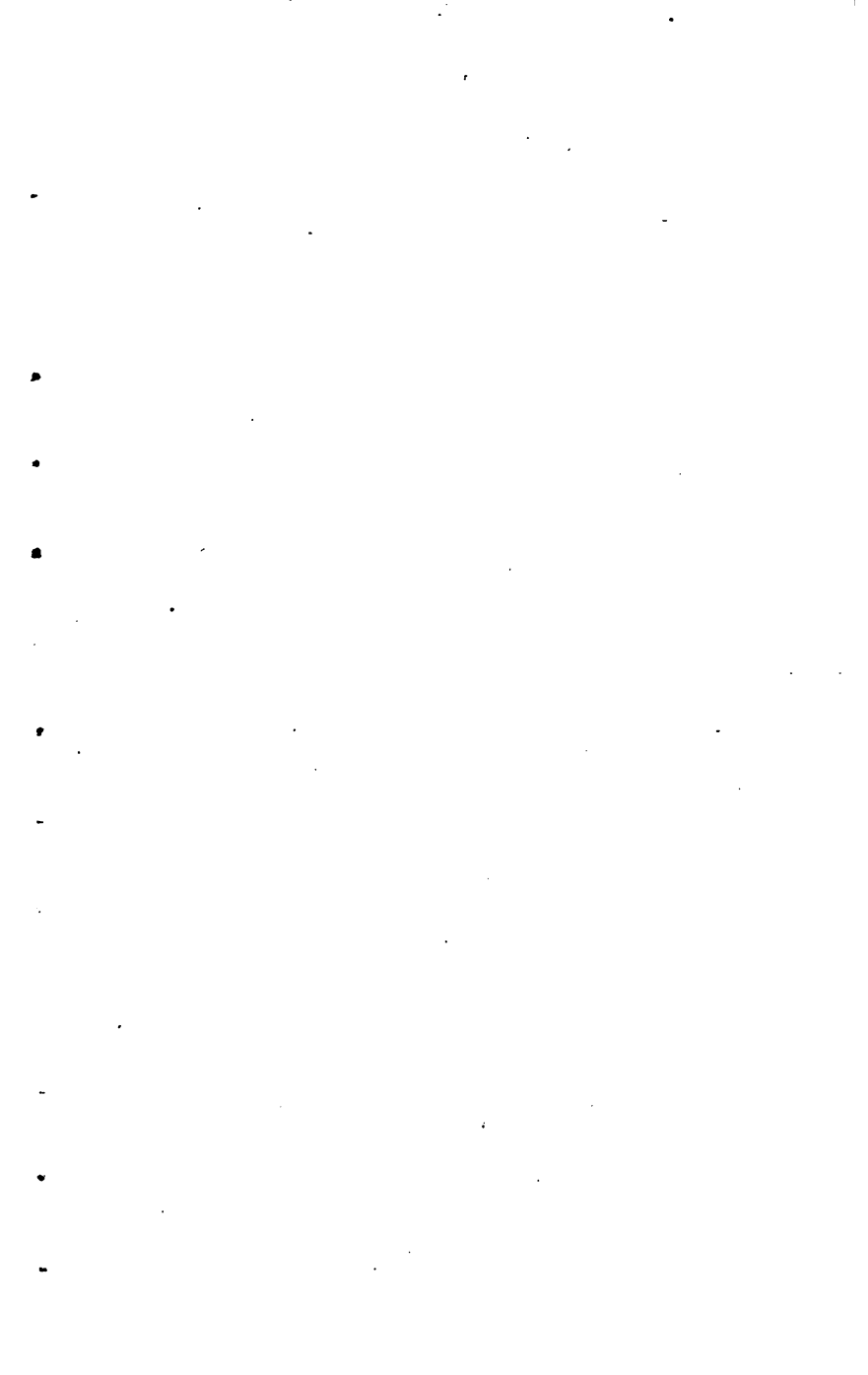




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A SONG OF THE HEART

By  
LOUIS M. <sup>I</sup>ELSHEM<sup>I</sup>US

*Author of "Poetical Works," Mammon," etc.*



*Boston*

**RICHARD G. BADGER**

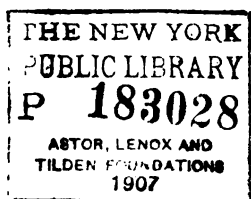
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## FOREWORD

The following Rhapsody was written in the year 1888, at Delaware Water Gap, Pa. The author then was only twenty-four years old. He informs his readers that he thinks it will enhance the interest of the song if they know the origin of a work. The author's enjoyment of many a work of his "confrères" was marred by the lack of any hint of the genesis of their longer poems. He takes the liberty to suggest to them to follow his initiative — for his benefit, and that of others.



## PROLOGUE

### *Morning-Birds*

This morning early, in the gleaming dawn,  
From dreams I woke: Aurora's minstrels —  
listen!

All sing a glorious song — while sun-glints  
glisten —

The mavis gurgles; the robin on the lawn  
Flutes madcap-madrigals, so clear and sweet.  
But hush! last eve a lovely maiden was mine.  
O are those songs prélude for love divine?  
Will she with love-lilts make my bliss complete?

Like darkest marjoram her locks are; brown  
As hazel-nuts her sparkling eyes; soft hands  
And sinuous shape, like Naiads in those lands  
Of goddess, and of shepherd. Oh! her gown  
Doth flutter in the wind. Bright youth is hers.  
She scolds not, when this love-gone near de-  
murs!

I

*Bird-Oracle True*

The symphonies of that lone dawn were true.  
For now she lays her dreamy eyes on me;  
Listens to all I say; and gives a few  
Long sighs, born of her Dido-bosom free.  
O birdlings! gushing forth your minstrelsy  
That morn, two morns ago! — so short —  
imbue  
Me with her laughter-soul and brown, bright  
eye,  
For she has kept my flower of rosy hue!

'Tis true; 'tis true! her sparkling eyes are mine;  
From them purl thought-floods of a wild-fire  
fair!  
She smiles and pouts when I am smiling there.  
And now she seems to be a sacred shrine  
Which, wound around with lilies, roses, glows,  
For me, when she her sweeter spirit shows!



## II

She is walking with sister —  
Down the lane of the broad high oaks;  
I have never yet kissed her —  
For I saw her today, at first —  
Romping with Jack through the grasses tall and  
sleek,  
Laughing in maidhood, enraptured with her  
joy —  
Now and then halting anear with me to speak;  
Running o'er fields like a fair Apollo-boy!

With her sister she's walking —  
Has a banjo adangling down; —  
We are seated — and talking  
Of the days that have gone to rest.  
Picking the strings, we are seeing pictures drear.  
Brown are her eyes, they have many a thought  
within.  
Young is she — sweet her dear shape — and  
not a tear  
Rolls down her cheek — she is innocent of sin.

### III

Her dear name is Nannie.  
Nannie strums so sweetly clear,  
That the oak-tree birdies  
Sing voluptuously dear.

In the arbor, while sunrays glinted jasper  
From her locks hanging down her maiden-  
shoulder;

A firm string came aloose — but my lovely  
Nannie,

She is provident — hath Minerva's thinking —  
For she keeps many strings to last her three days,  
So began to repair the banjo — grown a treasure  
In mine eyes. Then she asked me for a sharp  
knife —

Oh! the beech by the hillside grew more golden  
Than the hilt of high Kandy's sword, when  
flashing

Its broad side in the flames of burning diamonds.  
Oh, the grasses and bushes smelt of incense;  
And the bower pervaded all the envious breezes  
With the fragrance that rose from Nannie's  
banjo.

With a dexterous hand I cut the bad string;  
While so doing, her finger-tip was kissing  
My brown hand; — was a-kissing, as a rain-drop  
Softly lies on the leaf, then glides in grasses —  
As the wind hath the marjoram kissed in passing —

As the rivers kiss tufts of tallest reed-plants!  
So demurely pendent, near my sweetened finger,  
That a pulse of exhilaration's being  
Grew to life — dead'ning all woe, and sorrow —  
lifting

Me to bowers so rosy, where angels of joyance  
Their gold bow-strings were quivering for Israfel.  
It was done — and she picked at the strings  
that breathed

A sad tune; sung by men on plains; by rivers,  
Whose reverberant falls loudly emulated  
The grim thunder that rolls when grim Leo  
angers; —

Of the wepts of sad savages where Columbia  
Passes by shade-pines in far haunts of Oregon.  
It was done — and she passed away — a vision—  
A sweet moment's glad life — a fairest moment

That should be the bright rays to a passing  
storm-cloud;  
Passed away — down the lane with high, broad  
oak trees —  
Down the lane, whose meandering path sweet  
faded,  
In a grove with dense shade; where the robins  
Fluted songs, as in lonely southern lime-groves;  
Where the golden small bird hopped through  
the maples —  
Where the golden days' shadows began to  
lengthen —  
Passed away; — and a dream is never transient  
If those moments were not as a river's bubbles:  
Sparkling bright — then fast lost all within the  
current.

#### IV

Can any mortal say  
Why love blooms brightest in a day!  
Why, after three short days  
Our eyes have found each other's rays!  
Commingling, we are wishing for a time  
When, kissing, I shall strum another rhyme!  
Can any mortal say to me  
That love blooms in a few short days —  
Opens its petals glad and free  
Like any blossom on the summer-ways!

V

She came with Jack to the nook today —  
O the wild-fire child — with wild curls around  
Her perfect face!  
She listens to every fair thought I say;  
She who lieth so gypsy-like on the ground,  
With sweetest grace!  
What more: when on a beechen log she is re-  
clining:  
A-listening to me — and all my love divining!

## VI

What bringest thou, great Dawn!  
To me, when the hours usher in the dim grey  
    of day —  
When a thousand catbirds above the lawn,  
Ring their melodious concert in the wood,  
    where brood  
The slight shadows of the waxing morn — and  
    where  
The glow of awakened day is there!

Why touchest thou me, great Dawn!  
When soft slumbers yet should keep me —  
    O should steep me  
In odoriferous dreams — amorously drawn  
O'er the dream-goddess's face, and hair so fair!  
Why awakenest thou me! great Dawn, oh! say —  
And takest nature's soft sleep away!

What bringest thou, great Dawn!  
When the lonely crickets no more ring —  
    But sing,

And carol a thousand birds their joy above  
the lawn,  
Where the tops of the pines receive the mist,  
That's rist,  
When dim day awakens; and the silence is  
filled  
With music-prophesies, Love-thrilled!



## VII

### *New God Devoted to Lovers*

In the conspiracy of Heaven, what Spirit  
Have they evolved; what newer god of love  
Doth the sweet bud of lovers now inherit!  
Is it a god (whom I have never known)  
That comes at night (when through the dreary  
grove  
Of beech and oak — the weary monotone  
Of crickets, newts, and tree-toads rises long)  
To rob me of my slumber and my rest; —  
Make me but think and think of her sweet  
zest; —  
To fill me with her heart-throbs — and to throng  
Me with her words, her eyes, her hands — her  
soul!  
And make me wish for day. Yet sweet it is —  
For thus I know that she inspires my bliss  
At day — and makes her thought, at night, my  
goal!

## VIII

A charming rose, full-blown, like her bosom is!  
To her, who hath thought of me,  
One moment in the confusion of sounding  
waters —

Away, away —

While the hours, to me, seemed scorpion filled —  
While a rack was drawn by longing —  
While suspicion arose — confidence was lost —  
My being was buffeted, and tempest-tosst!  
To her, who hath thought of me,  
One moment, in the swash of dashing waters —

Away — away —

To her a rose, full-blown, like her bosom is!

## IX

### *Suspense*

Oh! may the warble of the bird be for a mate?  
Oh! may the song of silence be for doom;  
Oh! may the sweet surf be a lay to bloom  
The hillside rose more perfect? — May the late  
Eve tune her lyre for some gloomy fate?  
Say, Angell! sounds the silent sedge at morn,  
For days away — or for a sun-day, born?  
To some, is all a dream, a phantom state?

Sing no more, fair girl! with those dreamy tresses;  
Hum thou, my gem, no more, nor sigh atween!  
Is it the voice for distant days — or scene  
Memorable till death! — hush! — hush,—I love  
thee more

When, sweet enwound in all thy loveliness  
Thou gazest at me — who doth thee adore!

## X

I would the gleam of noon were in thine eye;  
The pearly luster in that brown orb tells,  
That in thy soul yet glorious morning dwells.  
Oh! listen to the birds' sweet minstrelsy,  
Those birds, that sing of June, and love; —  
Of trust, and far-day's orange-grove!  
Yet is the bud unfolded — yet  
The green leaves cling around; — oh! be,  
Soon, soon, a fragrant violet:  
Meditative of *thyself* and me!

## XI

It is all over —  
She loves not me! —  
All the pain — all the pain,  
That racked me in my longing and love,  
Is vain — oh! is it true — is vain!  
But, sweet one, thou hast a lover;  
And his love may turn to vengeance free:  
He may thy murderer, some day, prove!

## XII

Her voice sounds in the other room —  
And I tremble, and a shiver runs  
Down me — oh! why such tremors swift,  
When only one sweet word she lift  
From out her voice, that is in bloom!  
And an icy shiver down me runs.

### XIII

To talk to her is torture:  
For my lips they quiver;  
And my eyes seem moist from tears —  
For I think I never  
May know if she doth truly  
Love me, to last for many years!

## XIV

Why must one moment be  
Queen to our high felicity!  
And all the following hours  
Dark-dim, oh! grief's and sorrow's  
dowers!

She will never come  
On the beechen bole to lie —  
I'll prepare thy tomb!  
So we can together die!



## XV

Again to be enwound in meshes  
Of suffocating love!  
Why must I suffer all the tortures  
Of longing — for my love!  
And not a word doth a pass her lips  
She's cold; is deaf to my love-voice.  
Oh! if she knew mine eyes are moist  
With tears of deepest, truest love,  
Would she then change again:  
To the fresh rosebud of the last, long week!  
Oh! soothe my pain —  
Perchance to let me kiss her soft, browned cheek!  
I pine — I weep: my tears will never flow.  
My throat feels strangled now in my lone woe.  
O my belovèd! thou art dreaming of another;  
You know not how I weep — and die a thousand  
times!

## XVI

Wert thou only older, my fond dear child!  
Wert thou in thy reason, and not so wild!  
Let the blossoms open in maidenhood!  
Let kind thought more often in thy mind brood!  
Wert thou only flexible with thy tongue —  
Not so wild — not so moody — not so young.  
Is it joy that I am pining away each night?  
Rack of lovers: to never forget her sight.  
Hell of lovers: knowing her love not given;  
Worse than pain: e'er love-mad-driven!  
Wert thou only older, my fond dear child!—  
Wert thou in thy reason, and not so wild!—  
We could talk of love, and a home to come;  
Longing: I must seek a more timely tomb!

## XVII

What is love — a curse, if it be not returned!  
It is hell, when once it in her heart-room burned,  
But as a blast turns sudden, she  
Blows out her flame, and hurls a hell in me!

## XVIII

I would I were mad now!  
To the whispering creek would we go.  
Now, now — aft' the twelfth hour in the night!  
(As a thief I would rob you from your bed)  
All in the pitch and mystery of the night!  
Down the ghoul-haunted bosque would we go —  
Where no bird sings her warble so free; —  
I would force thee to listen to the waters slow —  
And lie on the bole of the bending beech-tree.  
There would we gaze in each other's eyes,  
Till the murmurs tinkle from angel-sounds:  
Oh, crystalline, as icicles 'neath breezy skies —  
Till the trees be illumed, and the silent grounds  
Be verberant with lyres, and the lutes o' the  
Heaven!  
Till our ecstasy be mad-like — and we entwine  
Our arms in love-lock — and the night be driven  
To a region where there is love divine!

There would I take thee — in the pitch o' the  
night —

To the gurgling creek, where the beech-trees  
lean

On the fragrance o' the waters; — in the mys-  
tery o' night!—

(I would rob thee, away from thy virgin-bed)

Now, now — aft the twelfth hour in the night;—

When no stars are shining — no life is seen —

If I were amad now!

## XIX

My beloved is not yet sweet of thought;  
Sedate; nor melancholy;  
She's wild, as breeze round Nimrod's cot.  
She is a maiden-rover!  
If stars could catch the prayers of lovers true:  
"Oh, stars! on her shower skies of pensive blue!

My beloved is not yet fair of mind —  
Nor modest; nor serene.  
She's boisterous as an April wind —  
Obstreperous as a hoyden;  
If fragrance of the roses could but speak:  
"Tell her to dream, that I must kiss her cheek!"

My beloved knows not yet sixteen years —  
Oh, therefore she's like fire —  
She romps, as any boy — and cheers  
In voice, without adoing.  
If we had means to whisper to her heart:  
"O love! court thought and dreams, to soothe  
my smart!"

## XX

I love my dreams more — more  
Than anything on earth  
For she, whom I adore,  
Comes tripping in her mirth:  
Comes to me with a longing eye —  
And pouts her lips — and melts them soon  
Within the honey of my passionate mouth.  
O there her sweet self's ever by —  
O there she's mine — my constant moon —  
My dear sweet wild-fire of the South!

I love my dreams more, more  
Than she whom I do love;  
For through a golden door  
She comes, with me to rove,  
And will not leave me — but will be  
The honeysuckle on the loving tree.  
She shunneth everyone; but, as the flower  
Of Ind, that blooms but in the sun,  
She only glows when I have spun  
A love-tale — waiting for a kiss's dower!

## XXI

### *Our Dreams Are Strange*

Our dreams are strange; but who doth weave  
them so?

Not the day's doings take their shuttles; the  
hours

Upon their distaffs, silvery built, do show  
Not in our slumbers long what were their  
flowers —

Or what their darkest dreads! — Oh! strange  
our dreams!

Our sleep doth image up new scenes — new life;  
When through the weary day we met with strife,  
Through night most lovely, beauteous dream-  
ing streams!

It is not recollection shapes the fair,  
Unpencilled theater of sleep; — it is not thought  
Of seasons past, that builds a golden stair  
To brightest, sweetest visions; — it is naught —  
For she was ice to me — could shake no hand —  
In dreams: she kisses — in love's blossomed  
land!



## XXII

### *Love Vanquishes Lust*

When we love not — Lust, and her fury Sister  
Around us watch — assume — in ambush lurk—  
But Love, with violet odors — mails that glister  
Within sweet Virtue's cool bland sun — doth  
work

A magic wonder in us! Though wan Pain  
Encircles us with thorny hedges, and unrest; —  
And worse, the e'er-recurring heart-pangs gain  
On Love-enleashed minds — may Love be blesst!  
I shall endure sweet suffering always!  
Love is a mail of adamant — protects  
The wanton moods; — and ever lovely sways.  
And though the loved one all my love rejects;  
Alone to love and so to flee all lust —  
Is, though I pine, to me more sweet and just!

## XXIII

### *Love-Tears*

Is there in nature — 'neath the blue — or low  
Within the earth a creature that can weep,  
Because a pair of auburn eyes ne'er flow  
Love-Dreams, — nor in them kindred thoughts  
would keep!  
Fond love! thou knowest not that when thou  
smilest —  
That when thou all my wishes dost frustrate —  
That when thou with thy charms a friend  
beguilest —  
That when thy fair orbs flash with casual hate—  
There are two eyes (sweet gazing on thee, love!)  
Two loving eyes that turn away — oh! tears  
Purl in their sockets; — they my deep love prove,  
Why canst thou not be mine for many years!  
Oh! must thou be so strange to me, that I  
Cannot repress my tears — must lonely cry!

## XXIV

Again those wakeful nights!  
Those silent, lonely, wildest watches  
Within the drear and solemn nights!  
When Love the locks of sleep unlatches  
To let my sweet love enter:  
Into my thought — into my soul — into  
The very principle that makes myself; —  
And she is radiant center  
Of all my gazings — would that her fair shape  
grew  
To what is sweetest in a merry elf:  
Ethereal — hovering in the night —  
Oh! dancing in a sweet delight!  
So borne to me — that I could press her —  
Kiss her soft cheek, and long caress her.  
But now she no more doth disturb  
My sleep — for unknown maidens come —  
Oh! would the Spirit of my sleep  
But let her through my dreamings roam!

## XXV

Love is not youth — love is not vernal breeze —  
Love is not like capricious antelopes  
Bounding through groves of Senegambian trees;  
Love is not youth! — it blossoms on western  
slopes,  
When dreams pervade the plaintive mind —  
and, high,  
The lagging cloudlets cream against the tints  
Of warm clear skies. It is the birth of sigh  
And plenished bosom: — beating — filled with  
flints,  
That fuel give to one consuming fire!  
It is companion of reflection; it lives  
With one sweet image, thought, and strong  
desire; —  
To the so sweet possessed a heaven gives!  
Oh! therefore, in thy youth, thou canst not  
love;  
My fair one! all thy charms but futile prove!

## XXVI

### *Love's Vision Blemished*

How strange, when loving thee, I see thy face  
All blemished, pale — its pigments die away;  
All thy sweet features; all thy charms, thy grace  
Assume an effigy of ugly clay!  
Moulded to frighten the beholder! — Dear!  
Why seemest thou a matron, old and worn;  
A hag — an Endor; a snake-head; and drear  
Thine aspect is — as though in dark worlds born!  
Thou art a being who disgusts — chills me;  
Who is abhorred; seems like a mocking fright!—  
Thou Lamia, having bloomed so beautifully —  
Art now worse than an asp in hideous night!  
For love thou hast not — coldest hate thy gage —  
And all my love paints thee more wry than age!

## XXVII

She's gone — oh! suddenly!  
We said farewell; — we spake  
No word; — how could I then awake  
A hatred that consumèd me!  
How could I kiss her in my wild unrest!  
How tell her that I loved her so.  
Oh! now my passions all have gone to rest;  
I love no more — I dwell with woe!

## XXVIII

### *Loss*

Has the sun now lost its glow!  
All the fields are lost in snow.  
Has the moon no silver light —  
Pale grows all the dreary night!  
Oh! the birds have lost their voice;  
Oh! my heart has lost its choicel  
(Oh! she's gone, and left me lonel)  
Never shall I nod to love —  
But with thee, *true* Nature, rove —  
Till I be with thee as onel !

## XXIX

### *Departure*

Departure of the loved one! — Oh! she loves  
Not me! — for if she loved me, from her eyes  
Would gush a flood of tears! — Departure proves  
If love were in the heart: or enmities  
Prevailed; in me there was love truly nestled;  
For I have tears that start up in my soul!  
All morning, thinking of her, have I wrestled  
With myself all against life's darkling goal.  
And I have sworn to love no more; — such pain,  
Sweet though it be, consumes the vitals all; —  
All unrequited love hath not one gain,  
Except round passion strongest mail to pall.  
Thou hast departed! I saw thee kissed, one  
    night.  
Farewell to thee! my love has taken flight.





